



THE GEOGRAPHY OF CULTURE IN PHILOSTRATUS' LIFE OF APOLLONIUS OF TYANA

Author(s): ROSHAN ABRAHAM

Source: *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 109, No. 4 (April-May 2014), pp. 465-480

Published by: The Classical Association of the Middle West and South, Inc. (CAMWS)

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5184/classicalj.109.4.0465>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

The Classical Association of the Middle West and South, Inc. (CAMWS) is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Classical Journal*

THE GEOGRAPHY OF CULTURE IN PHILOSTRATUS'
*LIFE OF APOLLONIUS OF TYANA**

Abstract: While the travel narrative in Philostratus' Life of Apollonius of Tyana has been the subject of much scholarly commentary, little has been said about the geography created by those travels. This paper examines the representation of Paraca, Greece, and Rome to demonstrate how Philostratus reverses the traditional Greek view of center and periphery. In his figuration, the extreme geographic periphery of Paraca becomes the center of civilization, whereas the traditional center of Rome is reconceptualized as a dangerous periphery. This reversal supports Philostratus' larger commentary on the loss of self-knowledge in the Greek world and its consequences.

Philostratus' *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (hereafter VA) is one of the most important texts for scholars interested in the discourse of travel in late antiquity.¹ The biography, a largely fictionalized account of the first-century sage, depicts the protagonist's journey through and beyond the Mediterranean *oikoumenē*. Earlier scholarship on VA focused on questions of historicity, genre, and reliability, and much of this work took the fantastic nature of Apollonius' travels as indicative of the author "perpetrating a work of fiction."² Recent work has given us a better understanding of travel as a literary motif that

* I would like to thank Jaś Elsner and David Frankfurter for their comments and suggestions, and Ryan Platte for help elucidating some of the terser passages of Philostratus' Greek. Additional thanks go to Laurel Fulkerson and the two anonymous reviewers. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2011 Society for Biblical Literature annual conference. Translations provided are my own, except where noted. Citations for VA follow Jones' Loeb edition.

¹ Recent scholarship has largely been focused on the *Realien* of ancient travel. In a useful review article, Jaś Elsner (2009) refers to "the perennial obsession of ancient historians with enticing a world of actuality out of the fragmentary materials before them, in resistance to (an overly?) imaginative reconstruction of mentalities" (75).

² Bowie (1978) 1653. The most recent example of this approach is Jones (2001), who takes Philostratus' geographic errors beyond Arabia as indicative of the work as "a romance of travel, with homage to Herodotus as well as lost authors such as Ctesias" (198–9).

aids Philostratus in presenting the superiority and divinity of Apollonius.³ Both bodies of scholarship have approached travel as a way to better understand Philostratus and his protagonist, the former in terms of the historical reliability of the text (travel betrays the fiction of Philostratus' Apollonius), the latter in regards to its literary and rhetorical qualities (travel develops Apollonius' superiority).

In this article, I am not so much interested in the historicity or functionality of Apollonius' journey as I am in examining the geography of culture created by Philostratus' representation of the places Apollonius visits. Namely, how does the description of the lands visited on Apollonius' travels reveal Philostratus' use of Greek ethnographic tropes in the service of his larger program? I begin by establishing the ambivalence in Greek culture regarding the East and the role of this ambivalence in both the slander against Apollonius and in Philostratus' defense of him. By contrasting his depiction of Paraca, the home of the Indian Brahmins, with the Mediterranean, I argue that Philostratus reverses the traditional ethnocentric understanding of center and periphery, allowing him to harmonize the distant, and therefore dangerous, East with normative Hellenistic culture. This reversal aids his larger criticism of the state of culture in the Greek world.

The "Double-Vision" of the East

Apollonius undertakes the journey to India after having found the study of philosophy to be in a dismal state throughout the Greek-speaking world of Asia Minor. At the age of fourteen, he leaves Tyana for Tarsus to begin his philosophical studies, but he quickly departs from Tarsus as well because he "considered the character of the city harmful and inappropriate for the study of philosophy" (τὸ δὲ τῆς πόλεως ἥθος ἄτοπὸν τε ἡγήετο καὶ οὐ χρηστὸν ἐμφιλοσοφῆσαι, 1.7.1). He continues to Aegeae, where he finds "a quiet suitable for pursuing philosophy and more vigorous activities" (ἐν αἷς ἡσυχία τε

³ The most important piece remains Elsner (1997), the influence of which has extended well beyond studies of VA. By identifying the two discourses of pilgrimage and the traveler's tale, Elsner shows how Philostratus uses the first to present Apollonius' transformation from pilgrim to object of pilgrimage and the second to allegorize the sage's philosophical and spiritual development. Montiglio (2005) takes a similar approach by showing how Philostratus depicts Apollonius' movements as a type of god-like wandering. Parker (2008) focuses specifically on the role of India within the text, arguing that Apollonius' travel there functions first to develop his authority and second to revise the memory of Alexander (288–94).

πρόσφορος τῷ φιλοσοφῆσonti καὶ σπουδαὶ νεανικώτεραι, 1.7.2). His teacher, however, “was not a very virtuous person, nor did he put his philosophy into practice, for he was a slave to his stomach and to sex and had modeled himself after Epicurus” (διδάσκαλος μὲν γὰρ ἦν αὐτῷ τῶν Πυθαγόρου λόγων οὐ πάνυ σπουδαῖος, οὐδὲ ἐνεργῶ τῇ φιλοσοφίᾳ χρώμενος, γαστρὸς τε γὰρ ἦττων ἦν καὶ ἀφροδισίων καὶ κατὰ τὸν Ἐπίκουρον ἐσχημάτιστο, *ibid*). After a five-year period of silence, he visits Antioch, where he found “the temple [of Apollo at Daphne] beautiful, but there was in it no serious pursuit, only semi-barbarous and uncultured men” (τὸ ἱερὸν χαρίεν μὲν, σπουδὴν δ’ ἐν αὐτῷ οὐδεμίαν, ἀλλ’ ἀνθρώπους ἡμιβαρβάρους καὶ ἀμούσους, 1.16.2).

Having failed to discover any serious philosophical pursuits in his initial travels through Asia Minor, Apollonius undertakes the journey to India to learn the “wiser and more divine,” (σοφώτερα τε . . . καὶ πολλῶ θεϊότερα, 3.16.2) ways of the Brahmins. Philostratus here draws upon the well-known biographical trope of the philosopher’s journey east in pursuit of “barbarian wisdom,” and thereby places Apollonius in the tradition of such seekers.⁴ He superimposes the conqueror’s campaign onto the philosopher’s journey by having Apollonius continually encounter memorials to Alexander the Great, thereby making his journey a type of reenactment of that campaign.⁵ Taken together, the *exempla* provided by ancient philosophers and the memory of Alexander’s expedition emphasize how the East has repeatedly been the object of Greek desire, whether that of knowledge or of imperial conquest, and subsequently legitimizes Apollonius’ own desire to make such a journey.⁶

⁴ The tradition of Pythagoras’ journey to Egypt is found as early as Herodotus. (Hdt. 2.81), on which see Szumyn (2004). By the third century CE, the view that philosophy began in the east had become a commonplace, as Diogenes’ Laertius’ preface attests. On the relationship between travel and the pursuit of wisdom, see Fowden (1982); Elsner (1997); Montiglio (2005); Harland (2011); and Scott (2011). Francis (1995) 96–7 makes a similar argument regarding the exempla of ancient philosophers as part of Philostratus’ agenda of legitimizing Apollonius, though he overlooks the related use of Alexander the Great.

⁵ Apollonius’ encounters with Alexander’s journey include: Mt. Nyssa, which Alexander is said to have climbed (2.9.3), an elephant dedicated by Alexander to Helios (2.12.2), and bronze panels detailing the deeds of Alexander and Porus (2.20.2–3). Cf. Parker (2008) 293–4.

⁶ That desire motivates Apollonius as well is highlighted in a literal reading of the initial presentation of his decision to journey to India: “he placed the Indian people and the wise ones among them in his heart” (ἐνθυμεῖται τὸ Ἰνδικὸν ἔθνος καὶ τοὺς ἐν αὐτῷ σοφοὺς, 1.18). On the representation of philosophical and spiritual wisdom in India, see Parker (2008) 251–307. The later traditions of Alexander the Great’s journey east merge the two themes of imperial conquest

Despite the legitimacy given to Apollonius' journey by the *exempla* of philosophers and conquerors, the foreignness of the land he is about to enter speaks to the competing discourse about the dangers of the East. While the wisdom of the East is in one instance the seed from which Greek philosophy sprouted, this same wisdom is in another instance the perversion of Greek religion and ritual, namely the source of that which becomes labeled "magic." As Philostratus himself notes, since Apollonius "associated with the *magoi* of Babylonia, the Brahmins of India, and the Naked Ones in Egypt, some consider him a *magos* and they slander him as falsely wise" (οἱ δέ, ἐπειδὴ μάγοις Βαβυλωνίων καὶ Ἰνδῶν Βραχμᾶσι καὶ τοῖς ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ Γυμνοῖς συνεγένετο, μάγον ἡγοῦνται αὐτὸν καὶ διαβάλλουσιν ὥς βιαίως σοφόν, 1.2.1).⁷ To an individual familiar with the negative reputation Apollonius had acquired in certain circles, it is clear that Philostratus is alluding to the view that the sage was a magician, i.e. a wonder-working fraud or a practitioner of illicit ritual activity.⁸ Philostratus, however, softens the initial presentation of Apollonius' reputation by choosing not to use the unequivocally negative term *goēs*, which is the pejorative used by Apollonius' opponents from book four onwards, employing instead the more ambiguous term *magos*, a term which only appears in book one of his work and

and philosophical inquiry, thereby painting him as a conqueror-cum-philosopher. See Stoneman (2008), especially 91–127 and 150–69.

⁷ Philostratus' use of *magoi* for identifying the Babylonian sages is odd, given that the ancient *testimonia* more frequently associate the *magoi* with Persia and Chaldeans with Babylon. However, since Babylon came under Persian control under Cyrus and Darius the Great, where it remained a capital city through Alexander the Great and the later Parthian and Sassanid Empires, it is not surprising that Philostratus would conflate Babylon and Persia. I will use "Persian priests" to refer back to Philostratus' "Babylonian *magoi*." On Chaldeans of Babylon: Democr. D-K A 16 (=Ael. VH 4.20, where he distinguishes between the Chaldeans of Babylon and *magoi*, both of whom were teachers of Democritus); Dicaerchus 16, 55–56 (Werhli); Hdt. 1.182–3; Ctesias 688 F 1b (=Diod. Sic. 2.24.2); Diod. Sic. 1.28.1; closer to Philostratus' time, Diog. Laert. 1.1, where he associates the *magoi* with Persians, and the Chaldeans with Babylonians or Assyrians. On Persian *magoi*: Democr. ibid.; Protagr. D-K A 2 (= Philost. VS 494, note that Philostratus himself elsewhere labels the *magoi* as Persian); Hdt. 1.132; Ctesias, ibid.; Strabo 15.3.15; Dio Chrys. 36.40.3; Ael. VH 2.17.

⁸ Parsing Philostratus' statement regarding the public's knowledge of Apollonius, it appears that by the early third century, it was largely quite negative. Outside of Philostratus' own text, only Lucian *Alexander* 5 and Cassius Dio 77.18.4 provide evidence for this negative reputation. Porphyry and Iamblichus have a positive view of Apollonius that shows no influence of Philostratus' text, suggesting either that a positive tradition existed outside of Philostratus or that there were multiple attempts to rehabilitate him throughout the third century. The *testimonia* are conveniently collected in the third volume of Jones' Loeb edition.

almost always in reference to a specific class of Persian religious functionaries.⁹ The ambiguity that results from the competing discourses is revealed by Philostratus' use of *magos* in the sentence quoted above. Appearing twice, the term first refers to the specific group of Persian priests and then to Apollonius' reputation for being a magician. It is, however, not a case of simple equivalence, whereby Apollonius' association with *magoi* identifies him as a *magos*. Rather, the second appearance of *magos* in Philostratus' sentence depends upon Apollonius' association with an assemblage of eastern sages—Babylonian *magoi*, Indian Brahmins, and the Naked Ones of Egypt—and constructs a generically dangerous individual who represents a homogenized and geographically and culturally dislocated eastern other. *Magos* thus functions as an "orientalizing" term, namely a term that identifies a specific group while at the same time creates a homogenized other.¹⁰

Normalizing India

Philostratus' task, stated in the programmatic chapter as "not to suffer the ignorance of the masses and to describe him in precise detail" (μὴ περιδεῖν τὴν τῶν πολλῶν ἄγνοιαν, ἀλλ' ἐξακριβῶσαι τὸν ἄνδρα, 1.2.3), requires him to reframe

⁹ Francis (1995) 96 n. 51 has also noticed that Philostratus uses *mageia* instead of *goēteia* in VA 1.2 and sees it as either reflecting the term used by Apollonius' opponents or, as argued by Raynor (1984), as a deliberate attempt by Philostratus to avoid the stronger term at the start of his work. In either case, the negative valence of *magos* in this passage is unique in the entirety of the work. Given that Philostratus indicates that Julia Domna commissioned him specifically to edit Damis' text "paying close attention to its diction" (τῆς ἀπαγγελίας αὐτῶν ἐπιμεληθῆναι, VA 1.3.1), his choice to use *magos* is clearly deliberate. According to Phrynichus' *Praeparatio Sophistica*, a lexicon of proper Attic vocabulary, *goēs* is "more Attic than *magos*" (γόης: Ἀττικώτερον τοῦ μάγος, S6.8), suggesting that Philostratus would have used the more pejorative term if his primary concern was style and diction. Since he uses the less Attic term, it is likely that he was avoiding a term with such clearly negative connotations. The usefulness of *magos* stems from its ambiguity, which comes from the possibility of recuperating its older (i.e. pre-Persian Wars) use to identify a specific group of Persian priests, who had various pedagogical and ritual roles in their society, in opposition to the later equivalence made between *magos* and *goēs*. Apuleius makes use of this exact strategy in *Apology* 25 by citing Plato *Alcibiades* 121e–122a. Phrynichus' entry quoted above makes the equivalence between *magos* and *goēs* apparent.

On Phrynichus, see Swain (1996) 53–4. On Atticism in the Second Sophistic more generally, see *ibid.* 43–64. Scholarship on the relationship between *magos* and *goēs* is quite abundant; for starting points, see Graf (1997) 20–35; Collins (2008) 54–60.

¹⁰ Cf. Said (1978) 21, where he calls Aeschylus' *Persians* "a highly artificial enactment of what a non-Oriental has made into a symbol for the whole Orient." (emphasis added) See further Said (1978) esp. 31–73.

Apollonius' association with the East and its sages so as to defuse the threat it represents to normative Greek culture, a threat which directly corresponds to the perceived otherness of the East. Alexander the Great and the notable philosophers of the past provide important *exempla* of Greeks journeying east in search of wisdom and conquest.¹¹ Apollonius' travels take him much further east than any of his predecessors, which limits the value of these *exempla* as an apologetic tool and transforms them into a measure by which Apollonius surpasses the great Greeks of the past. The memorials of Alexander are particularly important in this regard. In the final chapter of book two, Apollonius and his travelling companions reach an altar, erected by Alexander the Great "to honor the limit of his empire" (τὸ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ ἀρχῆς τέρμα τιμῶντος, 2.43) and a bronze stele, dedicated by the Indians who live across the Hyphasis River "to boast that Alexander had advanced no further" (λαμπρυνομένους ἐπὶ τῷ Ἀλέξανδρον μὴ προελθεῖν πρόσω, *ibid.*). The altar and stele mark the limit of space traversed or even known by any Greek or Roman prior to Apollonius. Upon crossing these markers, Apollonius not only outdoes his models but also undermines their usefulness for legitimizing his travel and association with the East. Without the precedent of previous Greek travelers, the expectation of a corrupting and uncivilized land beyond the Hyphasis is heightened all the more.

Philostratus initially fulfills this expectation in the first several chapters of book three by cataloguing the various Indian *thaumata*, drawn directly out of Ctesias and Herodotus, which are seen by the group.¹² When they arrive at Paraca, they continue to experience the marvel of this unknown country. However, the marvelousness of Paraca comes not from its otherness but rather from its remarkable similarity. Their first encounter with an inhabitant of Paraca reveals the fluency in the Greek language that the Indians here have and the Pythagorean flavor of their philosophy (VA 3.12).¹³ Likewise, Philostratus constructs the topography of Paraca through the lens of the sacred geography of Greece. Paraca

¹¹ Specifically in regard to India, see Parker (2008) 272–93.

¹² This includes the peacock fish (3.1.2), a unicorn whose horn has curative powers (3.2), a piebald woman (3.3) a tree that bears large, blue, pomegranate-like fruit (3.4), and snakes of enormous size and various powers, which require the Indians to use magical charms to hunt (3.6–8); see further Romm (1992) 82–109.

¹³ Francis (1995) 106ff takes the position that "there is, in fact, very little philosophy in the VA," and this has been the prevailing viewpoint of scholars regarding the Pythagoreanism of the VA. Notable exceptions are Flinterman (2009) and Praet (2009), the latter making the strongest case for the VA as "a rather unique work of philosophy even, because we can only understand its deeper philosophical message by adopting a thoroughly literary approach" (284–5).

is situated in the center of India, and the center of Paraca, the hill where the Brahmans live, is equated to the Acropolis in Athens (in both height and layout, VA 3.13) and referred to by the Brahmans as an *omphalos* (VA 3.14). Philostratus here redefines center and periphery by moving the Acropolis and the *omphalos* from Greece to the furthest reaches of India. Apollonius further discovers how well versed the Brahmans are in matters of Greek philosophy and culture during his interview with Iarchas, the leader of the Brahmans.¹⁴ The existence of Greek culture in Paraca derives neither from an *interpretatio Graeca* on the part of the narrator nor from Hellenization at the hands of an imperial power. Philostratus is careful to emphasize that Paraca had never been reached, let alone conquered, by any previous historical or mythological expedition.¹⁵ The Hellenistic culture found here is not only autochthonous but also the ultimate source of that found in the Mediterranean, once thought to have come to Greece through Egypt.¹⁶

Indeed, Egyptian contact with India seems not to surprise the travelers, as their response to the cult statues of the Brahmans reveal (3.14.3):

θεῶν δὲ ἀγάλμασιν ἐντυχεῖν φασιν, εἰ μὲν Ἰνδοῖς ἢ Αἰγυπτίοις, θαῦμα οὐδέν, τὰ δὲ γε ἀρχαιότατα τῶν παρ' Ἑλλήσι τό τε τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς τῆς Πολιάδος, καὶ τὸ τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος τοῦ Δηλίου καὶ τὸ τοῦ Διονύσου τοῦ Λιμναίου καὶ τὸ τοῦ Ἀμυκλαίου καὶ ὅποσα ὥδε ἀρχαῖα, ταῦτα ἰδρῦεσθαι τε τοὺς Ἰνδοὺς τούτους καὶ νομίζειν Ἑλληνικοῖς ἥθεσι.

They say that they happened upon statues of gods. There was nothing incredible if they were Indian or Egyptian, but they also saw the most ancient of gods worshiped by the Greeks. There were statues of Athena Polias, Apollo of Delos, and Dionysus of Limnae and of Amyclae, and others of similar antiquity. These the Indians set up and worship with Greek rites.

Their lack of surprise at finding Egyptian deities grouped with the Indian ones suggests that such contact would be expected by the travelers. However, finding statues of Athena Polias, Apollo of Delos, and Dionysus of Limnae and Amyclae

¹⁴ Greek philosophy: 3.18–19 (on self-knowledge and metempsychosis), 3.34–5 (on the elements and cosmology); Greek history and literature: 3.20 (on Homer and the Trojan War), 3.22 (on Palamedes), 3.30.3 (on judges at the Olympics), 3.31 (on Xerxes).

¹⁵ Aside from marking the end of Alexander's campaign before the Hyphasis River, Philostratus also notes the failed onslaught of Heracles and Dionysus on the fortress of the Brahmans (3.13).

¹⁶ For example, Iarchas indicates that the doctrine of metempsychosis travelled from the Brahmans to the Egyptians, the Egyptians to Pythagoras, and from Pythagoras finally to the Greeks (3.19).

in the same grouping is quite unexpected by the travelers.¹⁷ Not only do these Greek statues belong to cults originating from in the archaic period, but their particular grouping brings together cults from Athens (Athena Polias), Ionia (Apollo of Delos), and Sparta (Dionysus of Limnae and Amyclae), thereby creating a mental map that unifies archaic Attica, Ionia, and the Peloponnese into a singular identity.¹⁸ This grouping speaks to the tendency in Second Sophistic literature to create a literary depiction of a unified, if not homogenized, Greek past effaced of the differences that existed between the city-states.¹⁹ Philostratus gives this trope specific spatial coordinates by locating this idealized Greece in the untouched regions of India.

Paraca is further a realization of the often quoted dictum by Apollonius that “to the wise man Greece is everywhere, and he will neither regard nor believe any place to be deserted or barbarous, at least if he is living under the sight of virtue” (σοφῶ ἀνδρὶ Ἑλλὰς πάντα καὶ οὐδὲν ἔρημον ἢ βάρβαρον χωρίον οὔτε ἡγήσεται ὁ σοφὸς οὔτε νομεῖ ζῶν γε ὑπὸ τοῖς τῆς ἀρετῆς ὀφθαλμοῖς, 1.35.2). Apollonius is here responding to Damis’ insistence that he not refuse any gifts from the Babylonian king, since they are both in the king’s land and dependent upon him. Damis suggests taking attendant circumstances into consideration when determining what action to take, whereas Apollonius argues that the only consideration for behavior is virtue, which transcends the particularities of a situation. Regardless of where he is, a wise man is always a wise man, in so far as he consistently behaves as one. This consistency of character has a transformative effect on his location, allowing him to find Greece everywhere. In essence, being “in Greece” amounts to having self-knowledge and living by that self-knowledge. The realization of Greece in India is thus explained by the correlation between self-knowledge and Hellenism. Iarchas responds to the first question posed by Apollonius, namely whether the Brahmins “know themselves, thinking that they, like the Greeks, would consider it a difficult thing to know oneself” (ἤρετο οὖν ὁ Ἀπολλώνιος, εἰ καὶ αὐτοὺς ἴσασιν, οἰόμενος αὐτόν, ὥσπερ

¹⁷ The travellers’ surprise, the Greek rites by which the Indians worshipped these gods, and the lack of contact between Paraca and the Greek world prior to Apollonius’ journey taken together suggests that these Greek cults originated in Paraca. This is another example of Philostratus playing a game of one-upmanship. If others suggest an Egyptian origin for Greek cult, he has his protagonist discover them at an even further remove from the Greek world.

¹⁸ The discussions of Greek history held in Paraca point in similar fashion to times of Greek unity against a foreign enemy, such as Iarchas’ discourse about the Trojan War (3.19–22) and Apollonius’ conversation with the Indian king about Xerxes (3.31–2).

¹⁹ Swain (1996) 65–100. See also Porter (2001); Vasunia (2003).

Ἕλληνες, χαλεπὸν ἡγεῖσθαι τὸ ἑαυτὸν γινῶναι, 3.18), with the surprising statement that “we know everything since we first know ourselves (πάντα γινώσκουμεν, ἐπειδὴ πρώτους ἑαυτοὺς γινώσκουμεν, *ibid.*). Self-knowledge, considered a difficult, if not an impossible, thing to acquire in Greek thought becomes the starting point of the Brahmins’ philosophy, and it is the importance of self-knowledge to the Brahmins that explains the existence of Greece in Paraca.

Hellenism Lost

If Greece is to be found anywhere self-knowledge exists, then the deterioration of Hellenistic culture in the Greek world is best understood as a failure of self-knowledge. One of the most telling examples of this is in Apollonius’ refusal to join the Ionian league. He bases his refusal on to the discovery of Roman signatories amongst the Ionian ones, which, in a letter sent to the assembly, he refers to as a “barbarism.”²⁰ In essence, the Ionian league is no longer Ionian because of the presence of Roman members. The Athenians receive a similar rebuke from the sage, when he refuses to attend their *ecclesia*, considering the gladiatorial games held at the theater of Dionysus to have defiled the place where the assembly would have met (4.22.1). Apollonius refers to the games themselves as a form of human sacrifice, a marker of the most extreme type of cultural otherness, and indicates that this practice will compel Athena to leave the Acropolis and Dionysus to abandon his theater (4.22.2).²¹

The most explicit link between cultural decay and loss of identity occurs in Apollonius’ interaction with the Spartans. Apollonius receives an invitation from Spartan ambassadors “about whom there appeared nothing Spartan, but they were daintier than Lydians and full of extravagance” (Λακωνικὸν δὲ οὐδὲν περὶ αὐτοὺς ἐφαίνετο, ἀλλ’ ἄβρότερον αὐτῶν εἶχον καὶ συβάριδος μεστοὶ ἦσαν, 4.27). Apollonius here encounters Spartans who are not Spartans, in regards both to their cultural identity and their sexual identity, in that the ambassadors are further described as “men with smooth legs, oiled hair, not wearing beards, and with soft clothing” (ιδὼν δὲ ἄνδρας λείους τὰ σκέλη λιπαροὺς τὰς κόμας καὶ μηδὲ γενείοις χρωμένους, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν ἐσθῆα μαλακοῦς, *ibid.*). The response of the Spartan ephors is to issue a decree “to return everything to its ancient ways,” (ἐς

²⁰ VA 4.5; Jones translates τοῦ βαρβαρισμοῦ as “solecism,” which mitigates the severity of Apollonius’ rebuke by implying the linguistic error of the use of Romanized names as opposed to the more severe cultural backwardness that such use indicates.

²¹ On human sacrifice, see Rives (1995).

τὸ ἀρχαῖόν τε καθισταμένους πάντα, *ibid.*), and this results in Sparta becoming “like itself” (ἐγένετο ἡ Λακεδαιμῶν ἑαυτῇ ὅμοια, *ibid.*).

In his encounters with the Athenians, Ionians, and Spartans, Apollonius sees their behavior through an ethnographic lens, so that the loss of self-knowledge correlates to a fall from civilized, Greek culture to that of uncivilized barbarians.²² The Ionians have lost a cultural purity through the infiltration of barbarian names, the Athenians their patron deities through the acceptance of human sacrifice in sacred space, and the Spartans their masculinity through the deterioration of their traditional *paideia*. The failure of self-knowledge thus begets a loss of cultural, religious, and sexual identity, all of which traditionally separates the civilized Greek world from an uncivilized periphery.²³

A Re-Centered Map

Examining Philostratus’ depiction of Paraca and Greece together reveals that the cultural geography of VA follows a pattern. Much like Homer’s blameless Ethiopians and fortunate Hyperboreans, the Brahmins of Paraca have a moral superiority, from which Apollonius learns and after which he models himself. When Apollonius returns to Greece, he finds Greek culture in utter decay, which had already been suggested to him by Iarchas.²⁴ This type of cultural mapping, namely counterpointing virtue and morality of those civilizations and cultures found at the extreme ends of the earth with the corruption and degeneracy found

²² Interestingly, the triad of places where Apollonius finds Greek culture in decay, namely Athens, Ionia, and Sparta, repeat the same three places represented in the Greek cult statues found in Paraca at VA 3.14.3.

²³ It is worth noting that Apollonius consistently focuses on how Greeks behave and have adapted to the reality of the Roman Empire and does not demonstrate any general hostility to the empire as such. Indeed, he shows an acceptance of the empire when it is well-governed. His criticism of Nero, that “instead of making measures he sang them” (5.7.2, trans. Jones), demonstrates such an acceptance, as does the blessing he gives Vespasian, deeming him to be the “just, noble, and moderate” (5.28, trans. Jones) emperor for which he had hoped. Apollonius of course reprimands the emperor for rescinding the freedom given to the Greeks by Nero, though the emperor regains Apollonius’ approval after he hears “how he well conducted his reign thereafter” (5.41, trans. Jones). Throughout, Apollonius accepts the empire, so long as it is ruled well. Cf. Flinterman (1995) 117–27.

²⁴ In at least two places, Iarchas displays his belief that the Greeks have failed to grasp what constitutes truly moral behavior. First, he states that the stories of the Trojan War have ruined the Greeks by teaching them to honor conquerors over founders (3.19–20). Second, he comments how Greeks mistakenly believe the avoidance of wrong is the same thing as justice (3.25). Iarchas seems to view the Greek world not as having decayed but in a sorry state from the start.

in Greece, has been termed by Romm a “negative ethnocentric scheme.”²⁵ An important difference, however, exists between Philostratus’ use of this scheme and that found in the archaic and classical literature discussed by Romm. In the earlier literature, the negative ethnographic scheme works as a criticism of the corrupting power of culture. Since time and space are coterminous in Greek thought, the utopian lands of the periphery exist in a Hesiodic Golden Age, i.e. beyond culture altogether. For Philostratus, Paraca does not exist beyond but rather embedded within culture, specifically the imagined classical Greek culture redolent of Second Sophistic tastes.

A secondary consequence of representing the periphery as a kind of Second Sophistic utopia is the transformation of the periphery into the center. The description of Paraca makes it the preserve not only of the idealized Greek culture but also of the actual topography of that culture. As noted above, this is best seen in the association of the hill where the Brahmins live with the Athenian Acropolis and the Delphic *omphalos*. The implication of placing the authentic center at the perceived limit of the world would be that the perceived center of the world, regardless of whether we position it in Athens or Rome, is in fact an uncivilized or barbaric region. This is exactly what Apollonius finds upon his return from India in both the Aegean and Rome. The depiction of the two, however, differs in important ways. While the Aegean lands are represented as culturally backwards through the language of barbarism, Rome is represented using the ethnographic tropes usually reserved for far-off foreign places. Thus, when Apollonius decides to face Nero’s regime after the emperor’s expulsion of philosophers from the city, many of his disciples decide to depart. Apollonius praises those who stay and face the dangerous beast in Rome (4.38.3):

καὶ ἄλλως ἐπελθὼν γῆν, ὅσῃν οὐπω τις ἀνθρώπων, θηρία μὲν Ἀράβια τε καὶ Ἰνδικὰ πάμπολλα εἶδον, τὸ δὲ θηρίον τοῦτο, ὃ καλοῦσιν οἱ πολλοὶ τύραννον, οὔτε ὅποσαι κεφαλαὶ αὐτῷ, οἶδα, οὔτε εἰ γαμψώνυχόν τε καὶ καρχαρόδουν ἐστί. καίτοι πολιτικὸν μὲν εἶναι τὸ θηρίον τοῦτο λέγεται καὶ τὰ μέσα τῶν πόλεων οἰκεῖν, τοσούτῳ δὲ ἀγριώτερον διάκειται τῶν ὀρεϊνῶν τε καὶ ὑλαίων, ὅσῳ λέοντες μὲν καὶ παρδάλεις ἐνίοτε κολακευόμενοι ἡμεροῦνται καὶ μεταβάλλουσι τοῦ ἥθους, τοῦτι δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν καταψηχόντων ἐπαιρόμενον ἀγριώτερον αὐτοῦ γίγνεται καὶ λαφύσσει πάντα.

I have traveled through more lands than any human ever did, and seen a multitude of beasts in Arabia and India, but as for this beast, which many

²⁵ Romm (1992) 47.

people call a tyrant, I have no idea how many heads it has or whether it has crooked talons and jagged teeth. Although this beast is said to be political and to live in the middle of cities, its nature is wilder than beasts of mountains and forests in that lions and leopards are sometimes tamed by flattery, and change their ways, whereas this beast is incited by those who stroke it, becomes even more savage than it was before, and devours everything.

Philostratus represents Nero as the type of exotic *thauma* one expects to find in a peripheral area such as Arabia or India, minus the sense of awe or wonder. In addition to the language of monstrosity above, Philostratus also alludes to Homer's Polyphemus (4.36.3) and uses the language of cannibalism to refer to Nero's murder of his own mother (4.38.4). Paired with the threat he poses to philosophers, Nero becomes the antithesis of culture. In contrast to Rome, philosophy not only exists in Paraca but even finds its origin there. Placing Philostratus' representation of Rome, Greece and Paraca on a spectrum reveals Paraca as the authentic center of the world, as it is the home of an uncorrupted Hellenism, Rome as a dangerous periphery, as it is there that one finds the monsters who pose the greatest threat to self, and Greece as an intermediary zone, corrupted and barbarous due to the influence of Rome, yet not beyond repair.

Within the context of the Second Sophistic, the corruption of Greek identity presented by Philostratus suggests a critique of Greek culture under the Roman Empire. In the mouth of Iarchas, the Greeks are to blame themselves for this corruption of identity, since their use of Homer's Achilles (and similar heroes) as a model of manliness has led to a veneration of imperialism more generally. Iarchas states to Apollonius that (3.19.1):

Τροία μὲν ἀπώλετο, εἶπεν, ὑπὸ τῶν πλευσάντων Ἀχαιῶν τότε, ὑμᾶς δὲ ἀπολωλέκασιν οἱ ἐπ' αὐτῇ λόγοι. μόνους γὰρ ἄνδρας ἡγούμενοι τοὺς ἐς Τροίαν στρατευσάντας ἀμελεῖτε πλείονων τε καὶ θειοτέρων ἀνδρῶν, οὓς ἢ τε ὑμετέρα γῆ καὶ ἡ Αἰγυπτίων καὶ ἡ Ἰνδῶν ἤνεγκεν.

Troy was destroyed by the Greeks who sailed there at that time, and you Greeks have been destroyed by the tales about it. Since you consider only those who waged war against Troy were men, you neglect more numerous and diviner men whom your own country, the country of the Egyptians and of the Indians produced.

He continues by counterpointing the militarism of Achilles with the humanitarianism of Ganges, a former king of India (3.20.3):

ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸν Ἀχιλλεῖα Ὅμηρος ἄγει μὲν ὑπὲρ Ἑλένης ἐς Τροίαν, φησὶ δὲ αὐτὸν δώδεκα μὲν πόλεις ἐκ θαλάττης ἡρῆκεναι, πεζῇ δὲ ἑνδεκα, γυναῖκά τε ὑπὸ τοῦ βασιλέως ἀφαιρεθέντα ἐς μῆνιν ἀπενεχθῆναι, ὅτε δὴ ἀτεράμονα καὶ ὠμὸν δόξαι, σκεψώμεθα τὸν Ἰνδὸν πρὸς ταῦτα· πόλεων μὲν τοίνυν ἐξήκοντα οἰκιστὴς ἐγένετο, αἶπερ εἰσὶ δοκιμώτατοι τῶν τῆδε, τὸ δὲ πορθεῖν πόλεις ὅστις εὐκλεέστερον ἡγεῖται τοῦ ἀνοικίζειν πόλιν οὐκ ἔστι. Σκύθας δὲ τοὺς ὑπὲρ Καύκασόν ποτε στρατεύσαντας ἐπὶ τήνδε τὴν γῆν ἀπεώσατο. τὸ δὲ ἐλευθεροῦντα τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γῆν ἄνδρα ἀγαθὸν φαίνεσθαι πολλῶ βέλτιον τοῦ δουλείαν ἐπάγειν πόλει καὶ ταῦθ' ὑπὲρ γυναικός, ἣν εἰκὸς μὴδὲ ἀκουσαν ἡρπᾶσθαι. ξυμμαχίας δὲ αὐτῷ γενομένης πρὸς τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς χώρας, ἥς νῦν Φραώτης ἄρχει, κάκεινου παρανομώτατά τε καὶ ἀσελγέστατα γυναῖκα ἀφελομένου αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλυσεν τοὺς ὅρκους, οὕτω βεβαίως ὁμωμοκέναι φήσας, ὥς μὴδὲ ὅποτε ἡδικεῖτο λυπεῖν αὐτόν.

Since Homer brings Achilles to Troy because of Helen, and tells that he seized twelve cities by the sea and eleven on land, and that he flew into a rage when a woman was taken from him by the king, so that he showed himself to be merciless and cruel, let us examine an Indian facing similar things. Now he [King Ganges] became the founder of sixty cities, which are the most excellent of those in this land. There is no one who thinks destroying cities a better claim to fame than colonizing a city. He also repulsed the Scythians from above the Caucasus who once advanced with an army against this land. To be manifestly a good man by liberating your own country is by far better than to bring slavery to a city because of a woman, who was likely not unwilling to be carried off. Since he formed an alliance with the king of the country, which Phraotes now rules, and although that one most unlawfully and most lasciviously took away his wife, he did not break his oath, saying that he had so firmly sworn the oath that he would not harm him, even when he was wronged.

By critiquing the Greek veneration of Homer, the Brahmins suggest a break from the Homeric model of heroism. The difference between the Greek *Iliad* and its Indian counterpart is that the former values the conquest of cities and offensive action, much in the same way Achilles was also venerated for his imperialistic actions, while the latter values the establishment of cities and defensive action. This preference of colonizing over imperial aggression points back to earlier periods of Greek history when *oikistai* were the most important heroes of the Greek world. However, the point when imperialism was placed above colonizing marks for the Brahmins the time when the Greek world turned

down the wrong path, for it is easier to protect one city than to maintain an entire empire. The Brahmins' own history proves this, for they were capable of holding back Dionysus, Heracles, Alexander, and all others who had imperialistic designs on their land. On the other hand, Taxilla, the one-time seat of Porus' empire, fell to Alexander, whose own empire disintegrated shortly after his death. The veneration of militarism and imperialism found in Homer is the source of the Greek ethical decay, and this ethical decay finds expression in the failure of self-knowledge and ultimately the loss of Greek identity under Roman *imperium*.

Conclusion

Two important consequences derive from the cultural geography created by Philostratus. First, in his description of Paraca, he reconceives the ethnographic trope of the utopian periphery to refer not to a Hesiodic Golden Age existing beyond culture, such as one finds in archaic and classical Greek literature, but to a particular Greek past embedded within culture. The resulting map that he constructs switches center and periphery; the former center of civilization, Greece, is now represented as an uncivilized periphery, having become so because of a failure of self-knowledge. Rome is at an even further remove. One finds this trend of conceptualizing a geographic and cultural center away from Greece or Rome in other writings of the period, particularly in the literature of the early Christians, for whom the importance of the Greco-Roman world paled in comparison to that of the Levant. The new eastern-centered geography eventually becomes realized in the establishment of Constantinople in 330 CE.²⁶ Second, the reorientation of cultural geography found in Philostratus compels us to question the *communis opinio* that the literature of the Second Sophistic responds to the realities of the Roman Empire in Greece by fixating on a pre-Roman Greek past. Philostratus, writing at the end of the period whose nomenclature he coined, finds nostalgia insufficient to the task of rejuvenating the Hellenism of the Greek world. His defense of Apollonius involves representing the sage as an authentic agent of Hellenistic rejuvenation, and he

²⁶ This movement towards an eastern center is clearly seen in the *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, as shown by Elsner (2000). This deceptively dry text spends eighteen of its twenty-six manuscript pages listing the distances between stops from Bordeaux to Jerusalem and back to Milan. The centrality of Jerusalem to this text is seen in the change of narrative style in that six page portion of the text. Moreover, Jerusalem is one of only four places, the other three being Constantinople, Rome, and Milan, which the author considers important enough to provide summary calculations of the total distance traveled, number of changes, and number of halts to it.

becomes this by reaching a peripheral land where one would not expect to find Greek culture. Finding that culture in Paraca suggests a Hellenism that exists beyond the Hellenistic world. What differentiates Paracan Hellenism with that found in the Mediterranean is a rejection of imperialism, the veneration of which Iarchas identifies as causing the ruin of Greek culture. Philostratus thus not only defends the sage by emphasizing the East as the font of Greek culture (and not of magic) but he also questions the idealization of the Greek past. In essence, it is only in India that Apollonius can become the arch-Hellenist.

ROSHAN ABRAHAM

Washington University, rabraham@artsci.wustl.edu

WORKS CITED

- Bowie, Ewen L. 1978. "Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality." *ANRW* 2.16.2: 1652–99. Berlin.
- Collins, Derek. 2008. *Magic in the Ancient Greek World*. Malden, MA.
- Elsner, Jaś. 1997. "Hagiographic Geography: Travel and Allegory in the Life of Apollonius of Tyana." *JHS* 117: 22–37.
- . 2000. "The *Itinerarium Burdigalense*: Politics and Salvation in the Geography of Constantine's Empire." *JRS* 90: 181–95.
- . 2009. "Greco-Roman Travel Writing: New Perspectives on an Ancient Genre." *Studies in Travel Writing* 13.1: 75–81.
- Flinterman, Jaap-Jan. 1995. *Power, Paideia, and Pythagoreanism*. Amsterdam.
- . 2009. "The ancestor of my wisdom: Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism in *Life of Apollonius*." In *Philostratus*, edited by Ewen Bowie and Jaś Elsner, pp. 155–75. Cambridge.
- Fowden, Garth. 1982. "The Pagan Holy Man in Late Antique Society." *JHS* 102: 33–59.
- Francis, James A. 1995. *Subversive Virtue: Asceticism and Authority in the Second-Century Pagan World*. University Park, PA.
- Graf, Fritz. 1997. *Magic in the Ancient World*. Translated by Franklin Philip. Cambridge, MA.
- Harland, Philip A. 2011. "Journeys in Pursuit of Divine Wisdom: Thessalos and Other Seekers." In *Travel and Religion in Late Antiquity*, edited by Philip A. Harland, pp. 123–40. Ontario.
- Jones, Christopher P. 2001. "Apollonius of Tyana's Passage to India." *GRBS* 42: 185–99.
- . 2005–2006. *Flavius Philostratus: The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. 3 volumes. Cambridge, MA.
- Montiglio, Silvia. 2005. *Wandering in Ancient Greek Culture*. Chicago, IL.

- Parker, Grant. 2008. *The Making of Roman India*. Cambridge.
- Porter, James E. 2001. "Ideals and Ruins: Pausanias, Longinus, and the Second Sophistic." In *Pausanias: Travel and Memory in Roman Greece*, edited by S.E. Alcock, J.F. Cherry, and J. Elsner, pp. 63–92. Oxford.
- Praet, Danny. 2009. "Pythagoreanism and Planetary Deities: The Philosophical and Literary Master-structure of the *Vita Apollonii*." In *Theios Sophistes: Essays on Flavius Philostratus' Vita Apollonii*, edited by Kristoffel Demoen and Danny Praet, pp. 283–320. Leiden.
- Raynor, D.H. 1984. "Moeragenes and Philostratus: Two Views of Apollonius of Tyana." *CQ* 34:222–226.
- Rives, James. 1995. "Human Sacrifice among Pagans and Christians." *JRS* 85: 65–85.
- Romm, James. 1992. *Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploration, and Fiction*. Princeton, NJ.
- Said, Edward. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York.
- Scott, Ian W. 2011. "The Divine Wanderer: Travel and Divinization in Late Antiquity." In *Travel and Religion in Late Antiquity*, edited by Philip A. Harland, pp. 101–22. Ontario.
- Stoneman, Richard. 2008. *Alexander the Great: A Life in Legend*. New Haven, CT.
- Szumyn, Kristen. 2004. "The Barbarian Wisdom of the θεοὶ ἄνδρες: A Study of the Relationship between Spatial Marginality and Social Alterity." *AH* 34.1: 10–21.
- Swain, Simon. 1996. *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World, AD 50–250*. Oxford.
- Vasunia, Phiroze. 2003. "Plutarch and the Return of the Archaic." In *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*. Edited by A.J. Boyle and W.J. Dominik, pp. 359–90. Leiden.